

Congresswoman NYDIA M. VELAZQUEZ

Representing New York's 12th Congressional District
Ranking Democratic Member, House Small Business Committee



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Velázquez Includes Small Business in Rebuilding of Iraq

Congresswoman Nydia Velázquez successfully included a provision in the \$87 billion Iraq/Afghanistan spending bill recently considered by the U.S. House of Representatives to ensure small business participation in federal contracts for the reconstruction of Iraq.

"This amendment is meant to address the well-publicized fact that the Bush administration has awarded billions of dollars in mega-contracts to a handful of politically-connected U.S. corporations on a no-bid basis," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "These contracts were not open to fair competition – they were doled out in secret backroom negotiations. This amendment I offered will give small businesses a chance."

The Velázquez amendment requires all large corporations that receive contracts for the Iraq reconstruction to have a subcontracting plan in place on how they will make contracting opportunities available to domestic small businesses. Under current law, while large corporations are required to have a subcontracting plan for contracts performed in the U.S., there is no such requirement for contracts performed abroad. This amendment would require that overseas contracts be held to the same standards for small business opportunities as those carried out domestically.

"For years, the federal government has skirted its responsibility to small businesses by not requiring any portion of the billions and billions of federal dollars that flow overseas to go to them," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "My amendment changes this and puts some much-needed equity into the contracting process."

Small businesses are the backbone of the American economy. They account for 97 percent of all employers, provide 75 percent of all new jobs, and make up half of our GDP. Unlike their corporate counterparts that shed jobs in tough times and move operations overseas, small businesses create the majority of new jobs added each month to our economy.

Congresswoman Velázquez opposed the Bush administration's unilateral rush to war and voted against the latest \$87 billion Iraq spending bill but said, "if we are going to spend this money, we need to recognize that funneling it solely to large corporations will not only hurt small businesses, and likely squander taxpayer dollars, but it will also hinder our ability to get our economy back on track. What this amendment means is jobs at home and a chance for many of our communities to move towards economic recovery."

Access to Capital Conference for Local Women Entrepreneurs

The *We Can! Women Entrepreneurs Capital Access Networking Business Conference*, hosted by The Brooklyn Women's Business Center (BWBC) featured Congresswoman Velázquez as the keynote speaker.

"As everyone who has done it knows, owning a business is hard work," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "But women aren't shying away from it. They are embracing it. Women-owned businesses are one of the fastest growing small business sectors in the United States – and in New York City."

Many women business owners struggle with finding access to capital, often because of a lack of credit history. The conference intended to provide aspiring entrepreneurs and established business owners with practical information on getting the capital they need to launch and expand their businesses. There were sessions on preparing to borrow, as well as "borrowing for your business" from banks and microlenders. The conference also addressed the issue of obtaining loans and technical assistance through various Small Business Administration (SBA) programs.



Congresswoman Velázquez speaks to women entrepreneurs and small business owners.

Summer Internships Provide Hispanic Youth Behind the Scenes Look at Congress

The Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI), the nation's leading Hispanic non-profit and non-partisan educational organization, is now accepting applications for its summer internship program. For more than 25 years, CHCI has developed the next generation of Hispanic leaders through its educational and leadership development programs, services, and activities.

Each year, 30 promising Hispanic undergraduates are selected for CHCI's eight-week summer internship program in the nation's capital. CHCI interns work in congressional offices

assisting staff in a variety of duties, while gaining first-hand experience in the processes that develop national policy. CHCI provides interns with housing, a \$2,000 stipend, and domestic round-trip transportation.

Application deadline is January 31, 2004. The applications can be accessed online by visiting, www.chciyouth.org, or by contacting the Institute at 1-800-EXCEL-DC. For more information on CHCI visit www.chci.org.

Velázquez Addresses Housing Issues at CHCI Conference

The Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI) recently hosted its annual issues conference during Hispanic Heritage Month entitled, "Ascending to New Heights." As Chair of the Business and Economic Development Task Force of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC), Rep. Velázquez chaired a full day of discussion, including a session focusing on homebuyer education, and specifically, on predatory lending, which affects many Hispanics today – both across the country and in New York City.

"As we all know, increasing homeownership is one of the most laudable goals a community and, indeed, a nation, can pursue," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "It opens up the doors of opportunity to families in all neighborhoods and ensures that generations have the security they need to build successful lives. Predatory lending is a threat to this pursuit, forcing families to declare bankruptcy because of their inability to pay their mortgage, often times breaking them apart and crushing their dreams for economic stability."

The housing session was attended by lenders, housing and community advocates and legislators, and addressed the issue of predatory loan practices, which are prevalent in New York. Such practices that include financing excessive fees, inflating interest rates, and making loans

without regard to the borrower's ability to pay, can devastate vulnerable communities by forcing concentrated areas of low-income families into foreclosure. In addition, many New York City families that fall victim to predatory lending qualify for loans at significantly lower rates. Some of the discussed solutions included bringing lenders, advocates and policymakers together to create safeguards, best practices and lending guidelines, increasing homebuyer education and ensuring that the state plays a role in preventing predatory lending.

"Addressing predatory lending is critical to the growth of homeownership in our nation," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "As all of us here must continue to work together to find viable solutions to this issue, and we must keep in mind that our decisions affect millions of families across the country. What we heard during the discussion was an important first step in making decisions about a strategy to fight predatory lending."

The mission of the CHCI is to develop the next generation of Latino leaders by offering educational and leadership development programs, services, and activities that promote the growth of conference participants.

N.Y. Minority-Owned Businesses Speak Out in Washington

Several New York small, minority-owned businesses attended the second annual Minority Business Summit that was held on Capitol Hill and hosted by Congresswoman Velázquez and her Democratic colleagues on the House Small Business Committee.

The summit was held in conjunction with Minority Enterprise Development (MED) Week, a yearly event that recognizes the outstanding achievements of minority businesses and provides networking and seminars on business-building topics.

"Today our nation is facing tough economic times with 3.3 million private sector jobs lost since the start of the Bush administration," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "The most important job creator in the U.S. is small business, and this includes minority-owned enterprise. But minority businesses, like many small firms, are struggling – they need our help."

At the summit, several important issues for minority-owned companies were discussed – federal contracting, progress made on President Bush's small business agenda, and access to capital. In an attempt to continue working on their legislative agenda, those participating minority business leaders made recommendations on how to revive our sagging economy through small business development.

"During our discussion today, we were able to bring the focus in Washington back to the minority business agenda," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "I believe in the



Congresswoman Velázquez and her Democratic colleagues at the Minority Business Summit in D.C.

power of minority businesses – they will play an integral role in turning the current economic situation – both in New York City and across the nation – around."

More than 70 minority businesses and organizations from across the country joined the Democratic Members of the House Small Business Committee. A report with the final recommendations made at the summit will be released by the House Small Business Committee Democrats later this year.

Grants Awarded to Our Community

Department of Health and Human Services

Sunset Park Family Health Centers of Lutheran Medical Center -- \$350,000
to assist HIV patients

Department of Commerce -- National Telecommunication & Info. Administration

ACCION New York, Inc -- \$239,360
to develop a wireless lending initiative to increase access to credit by minority entrepreneurs

Department of Health and Human Services

NYC Administration for Children's Services -- \$498,834
to improve the health and well-being of children in the welfare system by strengthening family relationships

Department of Commerce

Brooklyn Legal Services -- \$50,000
to provide back-up legal assistance for job training and placement agencies that prepare former welfare recipients to enter the workforce

Department of Housing and Urban Development

NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development -- \$2,600,000
to eliminate lead-based paint hazards and the risk of childhood lead poisoning

Department of Health and Human Services

Fund for the City of New York -- \$5,000,000
for a bio-terrorism hospital preparedness program

Department of Health and Human Services

Cypress Hills Child Care Corporation -- \$454,537
for Head Start full-year family day-care

Universal Service Administrative Company

St. Cecilia School -- \$14,736
for Internet access and telecommunication services